



The City of San Diego  
Development Services

## Technical Policy B-34-1

**Subject:** URM Building Plan Review Policy

**Code Edition:** 2001 California Building Code

**Code Section:** -SDMC Ch. 14, Art. 5, Div. 4

-SDMC Ch. 12, Art. 1, Div. 4

-Building Newsletter 23-4

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**Approved By:** Isam Hasenin, Chief Building Official

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Effective immediately, in order to streamline the review process and provide for uniform enforcement, plan review of tenant improvement, alterations, structural retrofit, and addition projects in existing unreinforced masonry buildings shall be per the following policy, which provides clarification, revised or supplemental information to certain provisions of the referenced documents based on the intent and past history of the provisions.

Provisions of this policy are partly based on the requirements of Building Newsletter 23-4, the Unreinforced Masonry Building Ordinance, and acceptable structural engineering practices, taking into account the social, economical, and political concerns generally associated with seismic retrofit of existing buildings. The purpose of the Unreinforced Masonry Building Ordinance is to primarily reduce loss of life or injury, but which will not necessarily prevent loss of life or injury, or prevent earthquake damage to rehabilitated buildings.

These provisions have been developed through application of the above referenced regulations to many unreinforced masonry building projects over an extended time period and reflect past practices of this department. This policy shall be used in conjunction with the Unreinforced Masonry Building Ordinance contained in Chapter 14, Article 5, Division 4 of San Diego Municipal Code.

The applicable "Building Regulation" for Determination of Unsafe Structure per SDMC §121.0403(a) for vertical load-resisting elements, shall be the current California Building Code as amended and adopted by the City of San Diego (hereinafter referred to as CBC) for all unreinforced masonry building projects. The vertical load-resisting elements determined to be inadequate per this provision shall be upgraded to comply with the CBC.

The applicable "Building Regulation" for Determination of Unsafe Structure per SDMC §121.0403(b) for lateral load-resisting elements, and the extent and basis for preparation of Engineering Report and Retrofit Guideline per SDMC §145.0418 and §145.0424 shall be per the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> columns of the following table respectively:

<b>Project Description</b> (Ref. Note 1)	Applicable “Building Regulation” for Determination of <b>Unsafe Structure</b> per SDMC §121.0403(b) for lateral load-resisting elements  (Ref. Note 13)	Extent & basis for preparation of <b>Engineering Report &amp; Retrofit Guideline</b> per SDMC §145.0418 and §145.0424 pertaining to seismic strength &/or structural upgrade (Ref. Notes 1 & 2)
“Mandatory Retrofit of Essential or Hazardous Facilities” as defined in SDMC §145.0406	Not Applicable	Full seismic retrofit per CBC and Note 4
“Remodel Projects Exceeding 100% of Building Valuation” as defined in SDMC §145.0407 (Ref. Note 7)	Not Applicable	Full seismic retrofit per UCBC and Note 4 (Ref. Note 12)
Tenant Improvement projects involving no change in Occupancy-Use Hazard Category, or change to a lower Hazard Category with <b>no increase</b> in the Base Occupant Load of the Building (Ref. Notes 8, 9, & 10)	Not Required	Not Applicable
Tenant Improvement projects involving no change in Occupancy-Use Hazard Category, or change to a lower Hazard Category with <b>an increase</b> in the Base Occupant Load of the Building (Ref. Notes 8, 9, & 10)	1979 UBC	-Full seismic retrofit per UCBC and Note 3 if confirmed “Unsafe”, (Ref. Note 12)  -Otherwise, Just Note 3
Tenant Improvement projects involving a change in Occupancy-Use to a higher Hazard Category for <b>up to 33%</b> of the total floor area of the building , with <b>no increase</b> in the Building Base Occupant Load (Ref. Notes 8, 9, & 10)	Not Required	Not Applicable

Tenant Improvement projects involving a change in Occupancy-Use to a higher Hazard Category for <b>up to 33%</b> of the total floor area of the building , with <b>an increase</b> in the Building Base Occupant Load (Ref. Notes 8, 9, & 10)	1979 UBC	-Full seismic retrofit per UCBC and Note 3 if confirmed “Unsafe”, (Ref. Note 12)  -Otherwise, Just Note 3
Tenant Improvement projects involving a change in Occupancy-Use to a higher Hazard Category for <b>more than 33%</b> of the total floor area of the building , with <b>no increase</b> in the Building Base Occupant Load (Ref. Notes 8, 9, & 10)	1979 UBC	-Full seismic retrofit per UCBC and Note 3 if confirmed “Unsafe”, (Ref. Note 12)  -Otherwise, Just Note 3
Tenant Improvement projects involving a change in Occupancy-Use to a higher Hazard Category for <b>more than 33%</b> of the total floor area of the building , with <b>an increase</b> in the Building Base Occupant Load (Ref. Notes 8, 9, & 10)	1979 UBC	-Full seismic retrofit per CBC at 75% force level and Note 3 if confirmed “Unsafe”,  -Otherwise, Just Note 3
“Mandatory Retrofit of Buildings Not Classified as Essential or Hazardous Facilities” as defined <i>in</i> SDMC §145.0410	Not Required	Partial seismic retrofit per UCBC per detailed requirements of SDMC §145.0410
“Remodel Projects Exceeding 50% of Building Valuation” as defined in SDMC §145.0411 (Ref. Note 7)	1979 UBC	-Full seismic retrofit per UCBC and Note 4 if confirmed “Unsafe”, (Ref. Note 12)  -Otherwise, Partial seismic retrofit per UCBC per detailed requirements of SDMC §145.0411
Projects involving alteration of the existing vertical load-resisting elements	Not Required	Just Note 4

Projects involving alteration of the existing lateral load-resisting elements	1979 UBC	-Full seismic retrofit per UCBC and Note 4 if confirmed "Unsafe", (Ref. Note 12)  -Otherwise, Just Notes 4 & 5
Projects involving floor area addition(s) to existing unreinforced masonry buildings where the floor area addition(s) is/are under the horizontal projection and below the envelope of the existing building, i.e., basement addition(s), etc.	Not Required	Full seismic retrofit per CBC and Note 4
Projects involving seismically-isolated, self-supporting addition(s) to existing unreinforced masonry buildings where the structural frame of the existing building is subjected to no additional gravity or lateral loads and floor area addition(s) is/are not within or under the envelope of the existing building (Ref. Note 11)	Not Required	Not Applicable
Projects involving addition(s) to existing unreinforced masonry buildings not specifically noted in preceding project descriptions including floor area addition(s) within the envelope of the existing building (Ref. Note 11)	CBC	-Full seismic retrofit per CBC and Note 4 if confirmed "Unsafe",  -Otherwise, Just Notes 4 & 6

**Notes:**

1) Projects involving a combination of the listed individual descriptions per the actual scope, shall be examined for all listed individual Project Descriptions and must comply with all applicable/most stringent requirements. The seismic/structural evaluation and upgrade criteria for any unreinforced masonry building project that its scope could not be defined as a combination of the Project Descriptions listed in the above table, shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

2) New construction must comply with the current California Building Code as amended and adopted by the City of San Diego (CBC).

3) All existing vertical load-resisting elements that are subjected to higher design live loads due to a change in use must be shown to meet, or shall be upgraded to comply with, the CBC.

4) All existing vertical load-resisting elements that are altered or subjected to higher load demands as a result

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of proposed alterations or additions as applicable must be shown to meet, or shall be upgraded to comply with, the CBC.

5) All existing lateral load-resisting elements that are altered or subjected to higher load demands as a result of proposed alterations must be shown to meet, or shall be upgraded to comply with, Appendix Chapter 1 of the latest edition of Uniform Code For Building Conservation (UCBC).

6) All existing lateral load-resisting elements that are subjected to higher load demands as a result of proposed additions must be shown to meet, or shall be upgraded to comply with, the CBC.

7) For the purpose of determining the applicable requirements for projects involving a combination of the listed individual descriptions, the listed Remodel projects are assumed to include no change in use.

8) The Existing Occupancy Classification and Base Occupant Load of the building shall be established per Building Newsletter 23-4.

9) Occupancy-Use and Hazard Categories are per SDMC §145.0427.

10) For the purpose of determining the applicable requirements for projects involving a combination of the listed individual descriptions, the listed Tenant Improvement projects are assumed to include no structural work.

11) Addition projects may include floor area addition(s) and/or addition of exterior/interior objects, or roof appendages, etc., that when not seismically isolated, increase the seismic weight of the building or its distribution, in a manner to create higher seismic shear and/or over-turning demand.

12) Proposals using provisions of other nationally recognized documents for seismic retrofit of existing unreinforced masonry buildings may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

13) Evaluation of the structural frame of existing unreinforced masonry buildings for the **Unsafe Structure** provisions of SDMC §121.0403 shall be based on the required strength only. Unreinforced masonry buildings shall not be subjected to the more stringent requirements of the more recent building codes such as existence of Soft or Weak Stories, etc., nor should the structures be subjected to any current code prescriptive detailing provisions.

For unreinforced masonry Historical Buildings, covered in SDMC §145.0402 and defined in SDMC §145.0404, the seismic retrofit/structural upgrade provisions of the State Historical Building Code (SHBC) may be used in order to provide compliance with the Unreinforced Masonry Ordinance and this document as applicable. Refer to SDMC §145.0412.

Procedures for Abatement of Dangerous Structures and the criteria for determining that a structure is Dangerous shall be per SDMC §121.0401 and SDMC §121.0404.

This policy may be revised in part or whole without prior notice due to future amendments to the San Diego Municipal Code, future Federal and State regulations and/or when additional national standards may become available.